

8025.2

THREE WORDS

ON THE

~~72~~
67
W A R.

EDINBURGH:

1793

BRITISH MUSEUM



BRITISH MUSEUM

THREE WORDS

ON THE

W A R.

THE whole objections to the war seem truly to be comprised in this *one*, which is rather of the nature of a general remark, and has no peculiar application to the present case,—that war is less desirable than peace. We accordingly endeavoured to avoid it, as long as with honour or with safety we could; nor did we depart from this line of conduct, till there was no longer, with respect to us, any question of peace or war, but only, whether the scene of war should lie in our enemy's country or in our own. Nay, even this was more favourable than our real situation had become: more properly the question was, whether we should have to deal with only a foreign power, or should see that power combined with a faction among ourselves, and the flame of civil discord kindled throughout the land.

This, and no other, was the unhappy alternative on which we had to choose : for had France gone on in her course of success, as but for our interference seemed likely, and had her connection with our malcontents continued to subsist and to extend, which nothing but the war could have hindered, there was no reason to hope that their impious schemes could long have been prevented from ripening into action,

Those then who raise the cry of the decay of trade and manufactures,—let them speak to the *actual case*, and say, which would be most injurious to the trading interest,—a foreign or a civil war. They forget too, or rather they chuse to overlook, that long before we entered the field, the other powers of Europe had already been at war, and were by their very misfortunes under the necessity, at all events, of continuing the struggle,—unless we will suppose (which is beyond all belief) that Austria was to sit down contented with the loss of Flanders, and Sardinia with that of Nice and Savoy, and the Empire tamely to abandon Mentz and its other members, and thus open a passage for its enemy into the heart of its dominions. Now, while these countries were, at any rate, buckled to the strife, would their ability to take off and pay for our manufactures have been greater, for having to carry it on unassisted, and probably without success?

Would Holland, for instance, have been a better Customer than at present, if it had been
overrun

overrun and subdued, as it was in fact upon the very point of being? Would the people of Flanders have been more able to pay for our goods, if they had continued to be embraced and *squeezed*, to be fleeced and fraternised, as for some months they were, by their deliverers? or, would Germany have been a more commodious mart to us, when all access to it thro' Holland and Flanders was shut up, as last year, and part of its territories laid waste, and plundered, and the whole side of the Rhine put in danger of the same calamity, than by our possession of the avenues to it through Ostend, Ghent, Frankfort, and other places, which the arms of the Allies have since disengaged, and thro' which the manufactured goods of this country are now conveyed to the German market?

It is farther to be attended to, that Italy, Sicily, and Sardinia, all of which are now laid open to us, (and indeed the whole Trade of the Levant,) were, till our declaration, in a state of great and instant apprehension from the naval power of France in the Mediterranean; where the French now, owing to our possession of Toulon, dare not venture a single ship to sea. Neither Spain indeed, nor any other country in the neighbourhood of France, could at that time reckon itself secure against invasion, or an insurrection of its own subjects; and in this situation of alarm and distress, they certainly could not be supposed to launch out in adventures of trade, or to continue the same large and expensive consumption, as in seasons of more tranquillity. It is, in short, *plain*, that the market had already been much
narrowed,

narrowed by the general state of hostility and agitation, and that our accession to the alliance, by the relief it gave to the affairs of the distressed and threatened powers, has in that respect made the situation of things much better than before. The only market indeed from which the war excludes us, is that of France itself. And who at any rate would use a market, where, as we see from the best authorities, the very American vessels which bring them corn for their subsistence, are forbidden to carry off a single piece of coin in payment,—a market where the commercial and manufacturing cities, such as Bourdeaux and Lyons, seem for that very reason to be singled out for destruction, —and where the substantial traders, far from having it in their power to acquit their engagements, are daily sent to the Guillotine, as a means of confiscation of their effects.

But, in fact, none know so well as those who are loudest in the cry, that the present difficulties arise from causes, with which the war has no connection. What at once proves it is this, that tho' we are now only excluded from the French market, and in the last war were excluded from that of France, Spain, America, and Holland, yet the embarrassment is much greater now than on the former occasion. It is too to be observed, that in the American war we had a sore struggle to maintain our power upon the sea, and suffered many and considerable captures ; whereas in this war (contrary to what was at first predicted by the enemies of that measure, and even expected by

by its most zealous advocates) we have nearly swept the whole privateers of France from the face of the ocean, and bring home our own fleets unmolested, almost as in time of peace. The rate of insurance,* accordingly, is not near so high,—as on a medium not equal to one half—of what it was in the American war; and our West India fleets, beside returning without the loss of a single ship, and loaded with the produce of our own islands, have indirectly supplied the wants of the Spanish islands, and those of other countries with the produce of the manufactures of Britain. It is not then in the war that we are to look for the true cause of the present difficulties, but in the late uncommon prosperity and excessive profits of trade; by which, (as will always happen in such circumstances) many persons were tempted to engage in rash speculations and adventures, still more to commence trade upon borrowed capitals, and almost all to push their trade to the utmost extent which their capital could bear; whence ensued the certainty of derangement upon every disappointment or misfortune. In that branch of trade which had of late years become perhaps the most extensive of any—the cotton or muslin trade—the quantity of goods which had been manufactured was indeed so great that the market was glutted and overstocked before the war began.† Owing to these different causes, as well as to other circumstances altogether unconnected with

* To the West Indies it is eight or nine guineas, instead of twenty-five; from Leith to London two guineas, instead of five.

† Every body remembers that vast failures took place among the cotton dealers some years ago.

with a war with France, a stagnation in trade must have ensued, and great bankruptcies must have happened tho' the war had never been heard of, and that they took place at the very time of our declaration, far from showing any connection between those events, is just the circumstance which proves that the evil had been already done, and behoved to have its course.

One thing more on this head is curious and worth remarking, because it shews that this cry for peace is in a great measure affected,—which is, that the same party and description of people, who are here so loud against the war, as ruinous of trade, are in America equally loud and violent on the other side. In New York and Philadelphia the lower people, especially the idle and worthless part of them, headed as here by a few partisans of better station, have lately done their utmost to engage their country in this quarrel by taking part with France; but have been successfully resisted by the merchants and planters, and all the better and more sensible class of people. Now the cause of this opposite passion in the turbulent and seditious of the two countries is truly at bottom one and the same principle,—the desire of connection and fraternity with the French: for as favourable as the alliance of France and America in this war would be to the propagation of French principles in that country, so favourable would a peace between France and Britain in the present state of Europe be to the progress of them here, by restoring a free intercourse and communication between the two countries.

Hence the loud cry for assistance to France, by the members of those democratic societies, which have lately been instituted in America; and hence the violent clamour for peace by the members of Jacobin clubs, who have assumed to themselves the unmerited appellation of friends of the people, in this country. Against the insidious artifices of such men, who, with the olive branch in their hands, are secretly covering a dagger under its leaves, and meditating a mortal blow at all that is dear to us, it is necessary for every well-meaning subject of this kingdom to be upon his guard.

It is said, however, that we have not been successful.—But is it no success, that Holland, half conquered in effect, and in spirit totally, has been saved? That all Flanders has been recovered? That Savoy stands in a fair course to the same issue? That the war has been carried out of the Empire into the provinces of France? Is it nothing that Toulon and half the fleet of France are in our hands? That her trade is annihilated,—her navy ruined, and our arms, in one campaign, as far advanced into the country as the Duke of Marlborough's were (though he set out too from a nearer point) after nine years war, and all his costly battles? The truth is, so plenteous has been our harvest in this single season, as no one at our outset ventured to promise, or could reasonably hope.

But

But still the Convention make no overtures of peace. No: nor probably would they, were we even in possession of Paris, if they could then find a corner of the land in which to issue their mandates, and safely to bestow their persons. But this their obstinacy neither hinders our successes, nor their miseries to be truly such, nor both substantially to forward the object of the war. If the Convention refuse to treat, it is not that France does not feel her wounds, but that she is in the hands of cruel and unrelenting masters, who have no stake in her fortune, nor concern for her welfare. Had she been reduced to circumstances but half as miserable under any King that ever ruled her, (and even the great and ambitious Louis shall be no exception,) she had long ere now been intreating us for peace on our own terms; because the distress of the people and the governors would in that case have been one. But to her present governors the miseries of the people are as nothing, since their own single interest, (and other feeling than of this they have none,) lies in the continuance of the war at all events, to the end their own dominion also may be continued, and themselves enriched, by the whole treasure of the country passing through their hands.*

Are we then (it will be asked) to persist in this war till all France shall be subdued, and its government settled according to our pleasure? No, surely; there is no man who thinks of such a project as
prac-

* The Convention very lately negatived a proposal for inquiring into the state and increase of their fortunes.

practicable to our efforts. But the war has had two objects—the one, (which is now almost accomplished) to dispossess her of her recent conquests—the other, (which, too, by perseverance, seems in a probability of attainment) to break her overgrown and enormous power, and obtain a barrier to her neighbours against her wickedness and ambition. Even under their ancient government, and with their ancient manners, the French had, by long experience, been found to be a restless, faithless, unjust, and presumptuous nation; and enjoying the advantages of so compact, extensive, and fortunate a region, and which their immense numbers so fully people, they have at many different times, by nothing less than the combination of the best part of Europe, been contained within such bounds as were consistent with its safety. But under the new *order* of things, (if it is allowable so far to abuse this term,) it will not, cannot be denied, (how contrary soever to the prophecies of all the philanthropic, and all the philosophical) that there, the inherent vices of their character,—their pride, injustice, and lust of power,—are heightened a thousand fold; and mingling with the most strange and unheard-of fanaticism, have made them at once the fear and abomination of all the nations of the earth. What then remains in prudence, or what is imposed on us by the great law of self-defence, but that we seize the opportunity of her present difficulties, (an opportunity which we shall in vain look for in after times) to sap her enormous bulk, and make such acquisitions along her frontier, as shall curb her ferocious spirit, and hinder her again to
pour

pour forth her devouring rage upon the rest of the human race? It is this of narrowing her bounds, and planting such a hedge around her, that is now the plain substantial object of the war; and truly, unless this shall be accomplished, we have only spent our blood and treasure, to the end we may for ever have the same contest to renew, with a power that will always rise recruited from the struggle.

But when Lisle, and the other strengths of Flanders shall have been gained, then will Austria and Holland be possessed of that same firm barrier against the power of France, which has, in this campaign, proved so stout a bulwark to that kingdom against the efforts of the allies. The like security will accrue to the Empire by the conquest of the strong places of Alsace and Lorraine, and the like to Sardinia, some of whose dominions are still more exposed, by acquisitions on the Saône and Rhone. And from the whole, there will result to Great Britain, beside the inestimable purchase of the security of her own peace and government for ever, the reduction of that formidable power which has in all ages, and in almost all points, been her rival and her foe. In former days it has cost us many a million, and the waste of all our strength, to form and put in motion against France but a very small part of those powers, which are now heartily, and of their own accord, in league against her, to fight a battle, which is not more theirs than it is ours. The question is, shall we now, after all the cost of preparation, and with so fair a prospect opened to us, desert those allies, who
have

have ventured all upon our faith, abandon this great advantage, never again to be recovered, and barter the security of ages for a few years (and even these are uncertain) of luxury and ease?

With respect to loss, as yet we have suffered none, to discourage us in the pursuit of these so great and splendid objects. What fleet has been beaten? what army slaughtered or made captive? what valuable convoy intercepted? But one enterprise has miscarried in the whole campaign, and, from first to last of it, not one thousand of our countrymen have perished by the sword; a loss (however much to be lamented) which our forefathers often made in a single action, (and in far less necessary quarrels,) and yet held the victory to be cheaply purchased.

The war indeed is in one point such and so fortunate as we never had the luck to wage before: for we can say that every foot of our possessions and dependencies, in every quarter of the globe, is secure from the very prospect of attack or insult, and all those of our enemies equally miserable as ours are flourishing, and without the hope of succour or relief.

These, then, are the objects of the next campaign; and when these shall have been gained, far from pursuing chimeras of conquest, or taking a concern in the affairs of a corrupted and devoted people, we shall close our career, and leave them to themselves, to go on in their course, if such shall be the will of the Almighty, as the instruments

ments of his wrath, in taking vengeance of their crimes upon each other.

If, however, in the prosecution of this plan, thro' which our enemy may be *disabled* to harm us, there shall arise a prospect of restoring the affairs of France, by aid of the French themselves, to such a settlement as shall alter their system of universal enmity, and make them capable of maintaining peace, and observing justice towards other powers, surely this consummation, as even a higher and better security than their weakness, is with all care to be courted and promoted. Such a prospect we now enjoy thro' the possession of Toulon; and it were the height of folly, without trial to cast away so promising an earnest of the most speedy, as well as the most prosperous issue, to which this great contest can be conducted.



